

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04967 01 OF 02 251436Z
ACTION NEA-10

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P R 251404Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9403
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4967

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SY LE PINT PINS
SUBJ: A PRO-SYRIAN VIEW: REMARKS OF LEBANESE POLITICIAN
KAMAL SHATILA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. KAMAL SHATILA, A LEBANESE POLITICIAN WHO REFLECTS THE SYRIAN LINE, TOLD EMBOFF THE FOLLOWING ON AUGUST 25. THE GOL MUST DISMISS SA'AD HADDAD AND SAMI SHADIAC. THE LEBANESE ARMY UNIT AT KAWKABA MUST GO TO TIBNIN, AND BY ROAD NOT BY HELICOPTER. (SHATILA ALSO IMPLIED THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD ACTIVATE THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY IF THE ISRAELIS DID NOT BRING HADDAD AND SHIDIAC UNDER CONTROL.) THE CHRISTIANS APPEARED TO BE PREPARING FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF FIGHTING IN BEIRUT. WITHDRAWAL OF THE SYRIAN ARMY FROM BEIRUT WAS UNACCEPTABLE. PRESIDENT SARKIS SHOULD APPOINT A POLITICAL CABINET, EXCLUDING CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND BACHIR GEMAYEL. PRESIDENT SARKIS' "HESITANCY" WAS DISTRESSING. END SUMMARY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 04967 01 OF 02 251436Z

2. EMBOFF MET AUGUST 25 WITH KAMAL SHATILA, HEAD OF THE UNION OF POPULAR LABOR FORCES (UPLF), AND LATTER'S AIDE, SAMIR TRABULSI. SHATILA, WHO IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO BE A SYRIAN AGENT AND WHO IN ANY EVENT FAITHFULLY MIMICS THE SYRIAN LINE, SAID THE FOLLOWING.

3. SOUTH LEBANON.

A. SOUTH LEBANON IS THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM FACING THE COUNTRY AT THE MOMENT. TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM, THE GOL SHOULD START BY DISMISSING SA'AD HADDAD AND SAMI SHIDIAC FROM THE ARMY. NEXT, THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE ARMY IN THE SOUTH, THE LEGAL ONE. THERE ARE THREE ARMIES IN THE SOUTH: THE LEGAL LEBANESE ARMY AT KAWKABA, THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN THE ENCLAVES, AND THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY (LAA) UNIT AT NABATIYAH.

B. THE LEBANESE ARMY UNIT AT KAWKABA HAD TO GO TO TIBNIN, ITS ORIGINAL OBJECTIVE, AND NOT SOME OTHER LOCATION. THIS WAS NOT BECAUSE TIBNIN ITSELF WAS IMPORTANT, BUT BECAUSE THE UNIT HAD TO DEMONSTRATE IT COULD REACH ITS ANNOUNCED OBJECTIVE. MOREOVER, THE UNIT HAD TO GO BY ROAD. IF IT WENT BY HELICOPTER, THIS WOULD SHOW THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS COULD STOP THE LEBANESE ARMY.

C. THE PRESENCE OF THE LAA IN NABATIYAH WAS ONLY A RESPONSE TO THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. THE LAA WOULD GO AWAY IF THE MILITIAS WERE DISBANDED. LAST WEEK THE LAA IN NABATIYAH HAD SENT THE UPLF A TELEGRAM OFFERING TO COOPERATE WITH IT. THE UPLF HAD NOT YET RESPONDED TO THIS TELEGRAM AND WAS STILL STUDYING HOW TO ANSWER IT. (COMMENT: SHATILA'S MESSAGE WAS CLEAR: THE SYRIANS WOULD ACTIVATE THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY IF THE ISRAELIS DID NOT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 04967 01 OF 02 251436Z

BRING HADDAD AND SHIDIAC UNDER CONTROL.)

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04967 02 OF 02 251443Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 4967

4. BEIRUT.

A. THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH WAS LINKED WITH THAT OF BEIRUT, AND A SOLUTION IN ONE AREA WOULD MAKE EASIER A SOLUTION IN THE OTHER. NEVERTHELESS, THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT WAS NOT ENCOURAGING. THE CHRISTIANS WERE CONTINUING TO ARM THEMSELVES FROM ISRAEL AND SEMED TO BE PREPARING FOR ANOTHER ROUND.

B. THE UPLF REJECTED WITHDRAWAL OF THE ADF FROM BEIRUT THEREBY MAKING IT AN OPEN CITY. THE ADF WAS THE ONLY FORCE THAT COULD MAINTAIN SECURITY. THE LEBANESE ARMY WAS NOT UP TO THE TASK AND WOULD NOT BE UNTIL IT WAS REBUILT ON AN EQUITABLE BASIS. AN EXAMPLE OF THE ARMY'S CURRENT UNFAIRNESS OCCURRED IN AFQA, A MUSLIM VILLAGE, IN THE KISRWAN. ARMED PHALANGE HAD BEEN HARRASSING THE VILLAGE FOR ABOUT SIX WEEKS AND ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO THEY ATTACKED IT, KILLED THREE PEOPLE AND BURNED DOWN TWO HOUSES. THE LEBANESE ARMY IN THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 04967 02 OF 02 251443Z

REGIONA THEN INTERVENED AND DISARMED THE VICTIMS, THE MUSLIMS, RATHER THAN THE ATTACKERS, THE PHALANGISTS.

5. POLITICAL SOLUTION.

A. ONLY A POLITICAL SOLUTION COULD DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF LEBANON. THIS SOLUTION SHOULD BE BASED ON FORMER PRESIDENT SULAYMAN FRANJIYAH'S "CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENT" THAT INTER ALIA CALLED FOR REAPPORTIONING THE PARLIAMENT ON THE BASIS OF A 50-50 SPLIT BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS.

B. AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS MOVING TO SUCH A SOLUTION, PRESIDENT SARKIS SHOULD HOLD TALKS WITH THE PRINCIPAL POLITICAL LEADERS IN THE COUNTRY AND AGREE ON A POLITICAL PLATFORM. HE SHOULD THEN FORM A POLITICAL CABINET INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL FACTIONS, BUT EXCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS AND PEOPLE TREATING WITH

ISRAEL.

C. IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF'S QUESTIONS, SHATILA DID NOT SAY SPECIFICALLY WHICH PEOPLE SHOULD BE EXCLUDED, BUT DID NOTE THAT THERE WERE TWO TYPES OF CHRISTIANS; "CLOSED CHRISTIANS" WHO HAD INTOLERANT ATTITUDES AND "OPEN CHRISTIANS" WHO HAD TOLERANT ATTITUDES. BACHIR GEMAYEL AND CAMILLE CHARMOUN WERE "CLOSED CHRISTIANS," WHILE AMIN GEMAYEL AND DANY CHAMOUN HAD "OPEN TENDENCIES." (COMMENT: ASSUMING THAT SHATILA REPRESENTS THE SYRIAN VIEW, HIS REMARKS SUGGEST AGAIN THAT SYRIA ENVISIONS NO RADICAL TAMPERING WITH THE LEBANESE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND IS PREPARED TO REACH COMPROMISES WITH ALL BUT THE MOST EXTREME CHRISTIAN LEADERS. END COMMENT.)

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 04967 02 OF 02 251443Z

6. PRESIDENT SARKIS.

A. THE UPLF CONTINUED TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT SARKIS BUT WAS DISTRESSED BY HIS "HESITANCY." SARKIS INSTEAD OF BEING AN OPEN CHRISTIAN WAS STEERING A MIDDLE COURSE BETWEEN OPEN AND CLOSED CHRISTIANS.

B. (COMMENT: SHATILA'S LUKEWARM ENDORSEMENT OF SRKIS CONTRASTS WITH THE UPLF'S UNQUALIFIED EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT BEFORE THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS IN FEBRUARY. THEY ARE PRESUMABLY ANOTHER INDICATITON SESRIAN# DIS-ILLUSIONMENT WITH SARKIS. END COMMENT.)
KINSOLVING

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